



The Bali Restaurant: a touristic hot spot and lost gem on the island



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Fans race to learn Spanish before Bad Bunny's Super Bowl halftime show

By **FERNANDA FIGUEROA**
Associated Press

Bad Bunny is expected to perform the Super Bowl halftime show on Sunday entirely in Spanish, which has inspired fans to quickly learn the language.

In October, the Puerto Rican singer born Benito Antonio Martínez Ocasio kicked off the 51st season of "Saturday Night Live" expressing pride over the achievement in Spanish, after which he said in English, "If you didn't understand what I just said, you have four months to learn!" That declaration further stoked the anger of some conservatives who have vilified Bad Bunny for speaking out against President Donald Trump's anti-immigrant policies. The singer canceled the U.S. portion of his tour last year out of fear that Immigration and Customs Enforcement agents would target his fans.

There's been a frenzy online of people posting about Bad Bunny lyrics, including Puerto Ricans explaining slang used by the singer and non-Spanish speakers documenting their journey to learn Spanish.

Anticipation for his halftime performance has only intensified since last weekend, when his album, "Dejá Tirar Más Fotos," became the first Spanish-language album to win the Grammy for album of the year. He did not shy away from addressing targeted federal immigration operations at the awards.

"Before I say thanks to God, I'm going to say ICE out," he said in English after winning his first Grammy for *música urbana* album. "We're not savage, we're not animals, we're not aliens. We are humans and we are Americans."

Fans are learning Spanish before the Super Bowl

Niklaus Miller, 29, has been buckling down on learning Bad Bunny lyrics since the singer's SNL appearance months ago.



Niklaus Miller sits at his computer as he learns Bad Bunny's songs in preparation for Bad Bunny's Super Bowl halftime show at his home in the Hollywood section of Los Angeles Friday, Jan. 16, 2026.

"I am delusional enough to be like 'this would be easy. I could pick it up pretty quickly,'" Miller said.

The fervor to learn a new language within a short time span highlights the powerful impact of Latino culture in the U.S. despite the president's anti-immigrant rhetoric and actions. "It felt like a form of protest," Miller said. "What can I do right now besides what everyone is doing that is trying to help? It just feels good." Miller said he has gotten messages from people who watch his videos with their parents since he started posting about the process of learning Spanish. They say they feel seen and appreciated.

While Miller hasn't learned Bad Bunny's entire discography, he has learned portions of six songs that he feels will be part of the halftime show, including "Titi Me Preguntó," "DáMF" and "Baile Inolvidable."

The day after Bad Bunny was announced as the halftime act, O'Neil Thomas, 28, a New York City actor and content creator, started learning the singer's catalog.

"I was just so excited because he wasn't an artist that I expected," Thomas said. "And given how we

are right now with the state of the country I think he is the perfect person to headline such a humongous stage." The response to his TikTok videos showing Thomas learning "NUEVAYOL" and other tracks have been really positive, Thomas added. Many Puerto Rican people have reached out, saying they're proud that someone outside the community is attempting to learn about their culture.

Latin music and culture intensify interest in language

"People were already starting to make the effort with learning Spanish as a result of their interest in Latin music," said Vanessa Díaz, associate professor of Chicano and Latino studies at Loyola Marymount University. "The Super Bowl itself is an additional push for a trend that was already happening."

Díaz, who is the co-author of "P FKN R: How Bad Bunny Became the Global Voice of Puerto Rican Resistance," says the rise of Latin music over the past decade has pushed non-Spanish speakers to learn the language. Bad Bunny's clear messaging in his lyrics, videos and performances amplifies that interest, Díaz said.

Spanish is the most spoken language at home behind

English in the U.S. except in three states, according to U.S. Census data. Over 13% of residents age 5 and older speak it.

For Thomas, Bad Bunny's music offered the perfect opportunity to take on the challenge of learning a new language.

"I love Spanish and I always wanted to learn it," Thomas said. "So, this has been a fun introduction for me to finally hone in."

Both Miller and Thomas said that learning Spanish, specifically Puerto Rican Spanish, in a short period of time has been a unique challenge.

Thomas said listening to Bad Bunny's music casually is a different experience than learning the lyrics.

"Listening to his music is really fun," Thomas said. "The amount of times I've pressed rewind just to get a phrase, I can't even count." Miller said the hard part about learning the songs is that the Puerto Rican dialect tends to chop some words and it is very fast. Miller said if he hasn't worked on understanding a song for days, he might forget the pronunciation and it's hard to come back to it.

"It's fun but then stressful because I am a Type-A person, so that's been hard,

honestly," Miller said. "I'm firing on all cylinders."

A landmark for Latino culture is also politically divisive

Bad Bunny's booking at the Super Bowl has been divisive from the start. Trump called the selection "ridiculous." Conservatives have called it anti-American even though native-born Puerto Ricans are also U.S. citizens. Turning Point USA is putting on an alternative "All-American Halftime Show" with a lineup led by Kid Rock.

This all comes against the backdrop of Latinos and Spanish-speaking communities being targeted in Trump's immigration crackdowns. His executive actions have vastly expanded who is eligible for deportation and routine hearings have turned into deportation traps for migrants.

For Bad Bunny, the halftime show is the ultimate stage to showcase his music, heritage and global influence. For the NFL and Apple Music, it's a balancing act: deliver a spectacle that celebrates diversity without igniting controversy that scares off advertisers.

NFL Commissioner Roger Goodell has stood by the choice, citing Bad Bunny's immense popularity.

Petra Rivera-Rideau, associate professor of American studies at Wellesley College and co-author of "P FKN R," said there's a long history in the U.S. of Spanish being criminalized.

Bad Bunny is making it cool to know the language and changing the narrative around it, Díaz said. Now Spanish is something that people are aspiring to learn. Díaz doesn't think his performance will necessarily shift how Latinos are perceived in the U.S. but she says it will create an interesting conversation depending on "how people are going to grapple with the magnitude of having someone like Bad Bunny on the stage." □

Love in a time of war for journalist and activist in new documentary



(L-R) Janay Boulos and Abd Alkader Habak, winners of the World Cinema Documentary Special Jury Award for Journalistic Impact for "Birds of War," attend the 2026 Sundance Film Festival Awards Ceremony at The Ray Theatre on January 30, 2026 in Park City, Utah.

Park City, United States

An unlikely love story blossoming in the thick of war provides the backdrop to a new documentary that raises questions about how modern media cover conflict.

"Birds of War" traces the growing relationship between Syrian activist-cam-

eraman Abd Alkader Habak and Lebanese journalist Janay Boulos, who was working for the BBC in London as Syria's civil war unfurled.

What began as a strictly professional relationship on-the-ground activists were vital for international

media whose journalists found it difficult to operate in Syria -- develops into something more.

"It's about understanding who this person is you're working with," Boulos told AFP on the fringes of the Sundance Film Festival, where the documentary premiered last week.

"He's not a source, he's not a story. He's not somebody who's helping me advance my career. He's a human being. He has emotions. He has a cause."

Through text messages and their own personal video archive created over 13 years, Boulos and Habak have reconstructed the growth of their relationship for a documentary that won the World Cinema Documentary Special Jury Award for Journalistic Impact at Sundance.

The film traces Boulos' growing disenchantment with her job in the Arabic service at Britain's public broadcaster as global headlines inevitably moved on from the tragedy in Syria.

"The agenda changes quickly. At one point, we focus on the migration across the Mediterranean and the people dying... Then there is a tsunami in Indonesia.

"A week later, we forget about the tsunami. We're talking about something else.

And I'm, like, 'What's happened to those people?

Why are we not talking about them anymore?'"

In an effort to refocus her editors on the conflict in Syria, she asks Habak for human stories -- "nothing with blood," she tells him -- and the pair work on packages about rooftop gardening in a war zone.

As the topics soften, their relationship evolves.

Text messages and voice notes stray from the practical to the personal -- a morning greeting or videos of pets and the couple begin calling each other "little bird."

Then Habak becomes the story when he is photographed rescuing a child from the wreckage of a civilian convoy that is attacked while fleeing a city under siege.

The picture goes viral as it ricochets around the world and puts a target on his back for Bashar al-Assad's regime.

Habak sees no other option but to flee Syria, heading to Turkey, like hundreds of thousands of his compatriots during the war. □

With caviar McNuggets and heart-shaped pizza, fast food chains hope to win Valentine's diners

By DEE-ANN DURBIN
AP Business Writer

It's a tale as old as time, or at least as old as TikTok: chicken nuggets lovingly topped with a dab of caviar.

McDonald's is embracing the trend this Valentine's Day with a limited-time McNugget Caviar kit. The free kit, which will be available on McNuggetCaviar.com on Feb. 10, pairs a one-ounce tin of Paramount's Siberian sturgeon caviar with a \$25 McDonald's gift card to buy McNuggets. McDonald's is even throwing in some crème fraîche and a caviar spoon.

Valentine's Day is big business for U.S. restaurants. It's the second-most popular holiday for dining out after Mother's Day, according to the National Restaurant

Association.

Casual, sit-down restaurants see the biggest lift in traffic, especially when Valentine's Day is on a weekday, according to Circana, a market research firm. Fast-food restaurants see less of a bump in sales.

But McDonald's is one of several fast-food chains hoping to change that with special promotions or products.

For the 35th year in a row, White Castle is transforming its restaurants into Love Castles, with hostess seating, tableside service and Valentine's Day décor. White Castle said some of the 300 participating restaurants are already booked for the night.

Nugget lovers can get their

orders in a heart-shaped tray from Chick-fil-A. Papa Johns and Pizza Hut offer heart-shaped pizzas, while Auntie Anne's has a heart-shaped soft pretzel. Jack in the Box is giving away heart-shaped straws and Hardee's is making heart-shaped biscuits. Even 7-Eleven is getting in on the action, offering heart-shaped donuts and \$14 off delivery orders.

McDonald's said it got the idea for caviar McNuggets from fans, who have been rhapsodizing about the high-low pairing for years on social media. Celebrity chef David Chang has posted many times about his love for caviar on fried chicken and Popeyes biscuits. In 2024, the pop star Rihanna downed caviar

and chicken nuggets in a TikTok video.

McDonald's wouldn't say how many kits it will distribute, but said supplies are limited. That's no surprise:

a one-ounce tin of Siberian sturgeon caviar costs \$85 on Paramount's website, or about the cost of 166 Chicken McNuggets. □



In this March 4, 2015, file photo, an order of McDonald's Chicken McNuggets is displayed for a photo in Olmsted Falls, Ohio.

Associated Press

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How to create a calming 'nature nook' with indoor plants. Advice from Hilton Carter

By JESSICA DAMIANO
Associated Press

Have you dreamed of creating a calm and cozy spot at home to relax and recharge, but don't think you can spare the space? You don't need a "man cave," "she shed" or even a whole room to retreat to. Just one corner will do. One corner, warm lighting, a cozy chair and some plants, says interior and plant stylist Hilton Carter, who specializes in "nature nooks" — tiny wellness sanctuaries that calm the mind, body and spirit.

Carter has hosted plant-forward specials for HBO and PBS, launched a plant and accessories line with Target and authored six books (his most recent is "Unfurled: Designing a Living Home.") Nature nooks, he says, improve a home emotionally as well as aesthetically. Carter, 48, found himself leaning toward plants a decade ago. "I was feeling overwhelmed by the hustle and grind working as a freelance filmmaker in Los Angeles when a project took me to Glen Mills, Pennsylvania," he said. There, he popped into a garden-themed café.

"I was all knotted up, and I walked in there and felt a change. It felt like a vacation," he said. Not long after, Carter moved to New Orleans and bought a fiddle-leaf fig tree he named Frank. "I was at a crossroads in life, which all of us face, and I faced it with this plant," he said, adding that he made a vow to love it and keep it alive. "Everything I've accomplished since then was all due to that moment."



This 2025 image provided by Hilton Carter shows a plant-centered seating area at his home in Baltimore.

Associated Press

A nature nook doesn't need a lot of plants

Today, Carter, who lives in Baltimore with his wife and two children, has roughly 150 plants at home and another 200 or so in his studio, including Frank, now 14 feet tall. But creating a nature nook with as few as five plants can reap emotional benefits, he said. Before buying any plants, choose your site, Carter said. "There is no minimum or maximum size" for a nature-nook corner, he says. The important thing is "how lush you decide to make it." Next, assess lighting. "If one side of the corner has a nice-size window and it gets southern-facing light for eight hours of the day, there are particular plants that you could go wild with that could thrive in that light," Carter said. "But let's say you have a north-facing window on

one wall and it's a standard-size window. You probably will want to bring in artificial light." Don't get just any grow lights, though. "Find those companies that make beautiful grow bulbs. Some have two-color tones, some (replicate) daylight and others make warmer lights" that make the space inviting but still help plants thrive, Carter said. If relying on natural light, consider the seasons. "It may be brighter in the winter because all the leaves on the trees are gone, but in summer that's a whole different situation." Assess your light and bring that information to a plant shop for guidance.

A comfortable place to sit

Bring in "some sort of accent chair facing whatever direction is going to provide you with joy: facing out the

window, where the joy is having that sun caress your face, or facing in if you're reading," Carter said. Select plants realistically. "Be self-aware about your ability to care for plants," Carter said. Your nook might start out looking lush and beautiful, but if you don't take the time to care for the plants, it will look terrible and uninviting within weeks.

Personalize your nature nook

When creating nature nooks for clients, Carter asks them about their favorite vacations or where they spent honeymoons or anniversaries, because bringing in plants from those places can trigger happy memories. "Think about your happy place," Carter advised. "Get a sense of what you want to replicate and where you want to be

transported to."

A nature nook is an "escape from the chaos of the world," he said. When choosing plants, consider their foliage and how they look together. The glossiness of a burgundy Ficus elastica next to a Monstera 'Thai constellation,' for instance, is striking, he says.

"But if you met your wife in the Pacific Northwest and you're looking to create a look that's similar to that, you're going to get your more shaded plants — ferns, Norfolk pines, things that refer back to that space," he said.

And don't overlook pots. A beautiful terracotta planter that fits the space's vibe will evoke emotion and set the mood of the nook.

Some practical concerns

Consider how tall plants will grow, and how high the ceilings and windows are. Carter also advises being mindful of the type of flooring. "Use planters that will protect the floor" in case water drains out. Toxicity is another important matter. "Do you have pets? Do you have kids? What kinds of plants will thrive and keep them safe?" he said.

Enjoying your nook

Once your nature nook is in place, create a routine. Maybe drink your morning coffee there or read there in the evenings. Using the space regularly can be transformative, Carter said. "I'm much more patient, more kind, considerate and I'm a better listener because of plants," he said. "I think I'm entirely a more loving individual than before." □

Homage or propaganda? Carnival parade stars Brazil's Lula

Rio de Janeiro, Brazil

The face of the Brazilian president is omnipresent as a samba school rehearses its Carnival parade in front of thousands of spectators chanting the refrain of its theme song: "Ole, ole, ole, ola; Lula, Lula!"

The decision by samba school Academicos de Niteroi to pay homage to veteran leftist President Inacio Lula da Silva at this year's Carnival extravaganza has raised eyebrows just eight months before elections.

Academicos de Niteroi will be the first to parade down Rio de Janeiro's Sambodrome on February 15, at the start of the three-day competition that is the peak of the city's annual Carnival festivities.

Twelve samba schools will compete in parades featuring thousands of participants, with colossal, often animated floats, booming drum sections, and dancers draped in little more than beads and glitter.

Each year the schools choose a theme linked to Brazilian culture, history, or popular figures.

While Academicos argues it wants to honor Lula to thank him for his social wel-



Revelers from the Academicos de Niteroi samba school wave flags depicting Brazil's President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva during a technical rehearsal at the Sapucaí sambadrome in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil on January 30, 2026.

fare policies, the opposition has denounced the parade as equivalent to a campaign event months before official campaigning begins in August.

Lula, 80, who is expected to attend the parade as a spectator, is seeking a fourth term in the October elections.

"This is not propaganda, it's a tribute. Many people in our school were able to get an education thanks to the president's public policies,"

Hamilton Junior, one of the school's directors, told AFP.

'One of Brazil's greatest presidents'

Junior said it was a story of a man from Brazil's poor north-east who "faced many hardships and became one of Brazil's greatest presidents."

During technical rehearsals at the Sambodrome which draw large crowds -- dancers dressed as steelworkers in reference to Lula's past

occupation.

The lyrics of the song recount Lula's poor childhood in rural Pernambuco, his move to Sao Paulo, his union activism, and social policies implemented under his different administrations.

There is no mention of the October election, but the song does not shy away from Brazil's current political scene.

It refers to "tariffs and sanc-

tions" imposed by US President Donald Trump to punish Brazil for putting his ally, former far-right leader Jair Bolsonaro, on trial for plotting a coup.

Trump has since lifted many of these measures.

The song also includes the phrase "no amnesty," a nod to efforts by Bolsonaro's supporters to reduce a 27-year prison sentence he began serving in November.

A large screen mounted on the back of a truck displayed images mocking Bolsonaro -- showing him in a prison uniform or with blood-stained hands, a reference to his Covid-skepticism. Bolsonaro has anointed his eldest son, Senator Flavio Bolsonaro, as his political heir and presidential candidate.

Opposition complains

One of the composers of the samba told local media that Lula had cried when Academicos leaders travelled to Brasilia last year to play the song for him.

Center-right lawmaker Kim Kataguirí filed a lawsuit demanding Academicos return the one million reais (\$180,000) each of the 12 schools receives in federal funding for the parade. □

WHO announces restart of preventive cholera vaccinations after nearly 4-year halt

CAPE TOWN, South Africa (AP)

Preventive cholera vaccination programs will restart globally after they were halted for nearly four years due to a vaccine shortage, the World Health Organization said Wednesday. In a joint statement, WHO, vaccine alliance GAVI and the United Nations Children's Fund said stocks of oral cholera vaccines in the global stockpile they manage had improved to nearly 70 million doses last year.

The vaccines are distributed free to countries that need them, but they had to be used only in reaction to outbreaks rather than preventative campaigns after a shortage was announced in 2022 because

of a surge in demand. The stockpile dropped to 35 million doses and countries grappling with outbreaks requested many more than were available.

WHO, GAVI and UNICEF said a first allocation of 20 million doses was now being deployed, with 3.6 million doses going to Mozambique, 6.1 million to Congo and 10.3 million planned for delivery to Bangladesh. "Global vaccine shortages forced us into a cycle of reacting to cholera outbreaks instead of preventing them. We are now in a stronger position to break that cycle," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in a statement.

Cholera is a diarrheal disease caused by water-borne bacteria. Outbreaks often occur as a result of poverty, conflict or climate crises as health facilities are destroyed, access to clean water is disrupted, or floods spread the bacteria.

Mozambique is one of the priority countries after devastating flooding in the southern African nation last month affected around 700,000 people and raised the threat of cholera outbreaks.

WHO has previously said that while poverty and conflict remain enduring drivers for cholera around the world, climate change aggravated a global up-

surge of the disease that began in 2021 because it contributed to more and wetter storms.

The vaccine shortage also prompted WHO to recommend a one-dose vac-

cination strategy instead of two doses. It said Wednesday a one-dose strategy would remain standard, with two-dose campaigns considered on a case-by-case basis. □



A health worker administers a cholera vaccine in Blantyre, southern Malawi, Thursday, Jan. 22, 2026.

Associated Press

UNESCO recognition inspires hope in Afghan artist's city

Herat, Afghanistan

Hundreds of years after the celebrated painter Kamal ud-Din Behzad roamed the streets of Herat, artists in the Afghan city are finding joy and hope in his recognition by UNESCO.

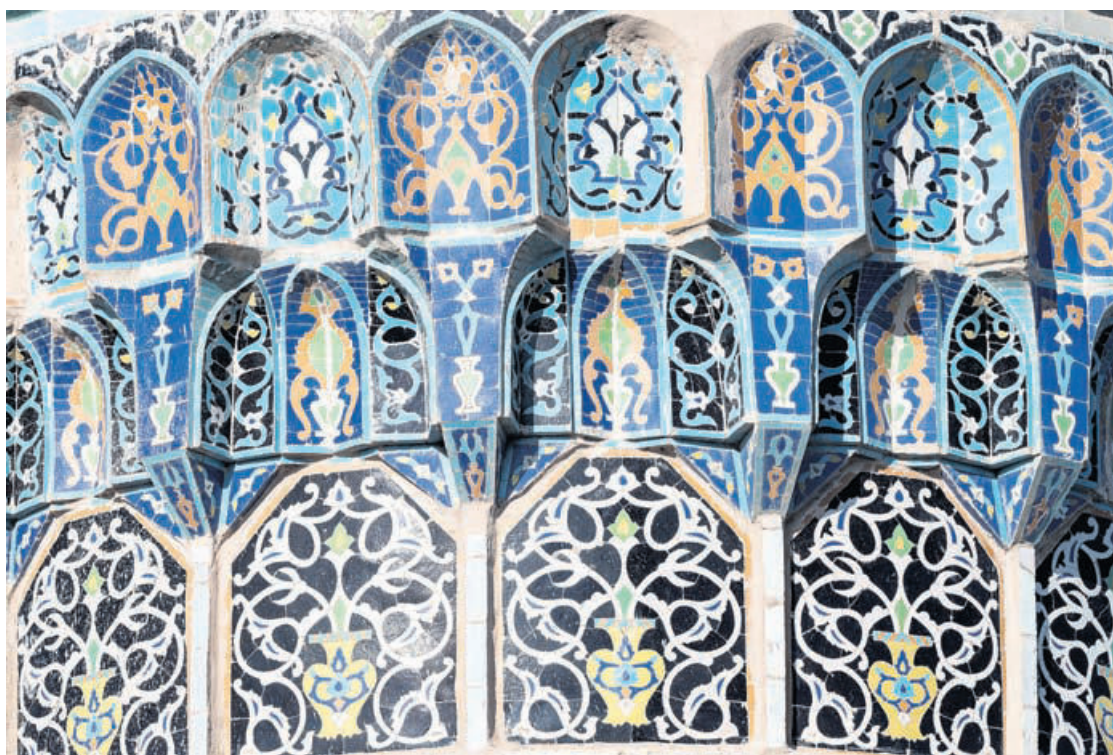
Sitting cross-legged on a red carpet, artist Mohammad Younes Qane uses an ultra-fine paintbrush to trace details such as a horse's mane or the beads of a necklace.

"When I paint, I'm taken back 500 years, to the streets of Herat back then," when the rulers of the Timurid empire were patrons of artists such as Behzad, Qane said with a smile.

Since he was a teenager, the 45-year-old has been practising Behzad's celebrated miniature art style, which inspired French artist Henri Matisse.

A contemporary of Italian masters Leonardo da Vinci and Sandro Botticelli, Behzad brought a new style to Herat before settling in Tabriz, in modern-day Iran. Celebrating his "vibrant cultural expression", the UN's cultural agency inscribed Behzad's style of miniature art on its list of Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity in December.

Such recognition was "truly joyful news", coming "at a time when we are in dark-



This picture taken on January 8, 2026 shows miniature art carved on the wall of Jami Masjid, also known as the Great Mosque of Herat in Herat.

ness and facing very difficult conditions", Qane said. Since the Taliban authorities returned to power in 2021 and imposed their strict interpretation of Islamic law, many artists have left Afghanistan.

Qane has closed his gallery and works at home, with clients now rare and exhibitions non-existent. He sometimes climbs the hill to a white tomb believed to be Behzad's, where he finds peace.

Taliban officials have banned music in public places, as well as the representation of living things.

'Proud of Behzad'

Numerous residents pointed to the increasing enforcement of the ban on showing human faces, which are a common feature of Behzad-style artworks.

"It's very sad, because we are proud of Behzad in Herat," said one resident, speaking on condition of anonymity for security reasons.

Ahmad Jawid Zargham, the former head of the provincial arts and culture department, said paintings

were "simple and without soul" before Behzad.

"He introduced scenes from people's everyday life. For example, ordinary people, passersby, dervishes, mulahs, scenes of teaching girls and boys, or groups of workers busy with architecture," Zargham told AFP.

At Herat's central mosque, which is covered in blue ceramic tiles, there are delicate floral and geometric motifs created by Behzad. But his decorated manuscripts are kept abroad, at world-renowned institutions such as New York's Metro-

politan Museum of Art, the British Library in London and the Topkapi Palace Museum in Istanbul.

Michael Barry, a leading specialist in miniature art, said that people being deprived of their cultural patrimony was "the height of injustice".

At the same time, he remained "very aware of the care that is required to maintain these delicate works", which can easily be damaged by light exposure.

Conscious of the difficulties of repatriating Behzad's artworks, Barry instead enlarged and reproduced them in 2017 for an exhibition at Herat's citadel.

But residents can no longer view the bright autumn colours of the tree of life, a symbol often painted by Behzad, as the wooden door has been padlocked shut.

Despite welcoming the UNESCO recognition, the provincial arts and culture department did not give an explanation for its closure.

'Freedom'

Recalling Herat's importance, Barry said the city was the "world capital of painting, poetry, music, philosophy, mathematics. The Florence of the Islamic world".

Spain sets a tourism record with 96.8 million foreign visitors in 2025

By **TERESA MEDRANO Associated Press**

MADRID (AP) — Spain set a new tourism record in 2025 when it welcomed 96.8 million foreign visitors, according to figures released Tuesday by the National Statistics Institute.

The number of international visitors increased 3.2% compared to 2024, when there were 94 million tourists.

Spain is one of the world's most popular destinations, where tourism accounts for 12.6% of gross domestic product. It ranks third on the U.N. World Tourism Barometer's list of the world's top tourism earners, after the United Kingdom and France.

The income from foreign visitors rose 6.8% to 134.7 billion euros (\$158.9 billion) last year, compared with 126 billion euros in 2024,

the Ministry of Tourism said. The increase in the number of tourists and their spending meet the objective of transforming "the tourism

model into one that is more sustainable and based on prioritizing quality over quantity," the ministry said in a statement.

Catalonia, the northeastern region where Barcelona is located, attracted around 20.1 million tourists, 0.6% more than in 2024. It was followed by the Mediterranean islands and the Canary Islands, a flagship of the sun and beach tourism for which Spain is known.

Most travelers came from the U.K. (19 million), France (12.7 million) and Germany (12 million).

It was Spain's third record-breaking year since 2019, the year before the COV-

ID-19 pandemic that paralyzed international leisure travel.

As tourism rebounded globally, it put pressure on accommodation in Spain, particularly in city centers where short-term rentals have proliferated, causing friction at times with locals, many of whom feel priced out of the housing and rental market due to mass tourism.

Last year set a new record for international tourist arrivals in the post-pandemic era: an estimated 1.52 billion international tourists were recorded worldwide, an increase of almost 60 million than in 2024, according to the U.N. barometer.



People crowd along the historic La Rambla promenade of Barcelona as Catalans celebrate the day of their patron Sant Jordi, Spain, Sunday, April 23, 2023.

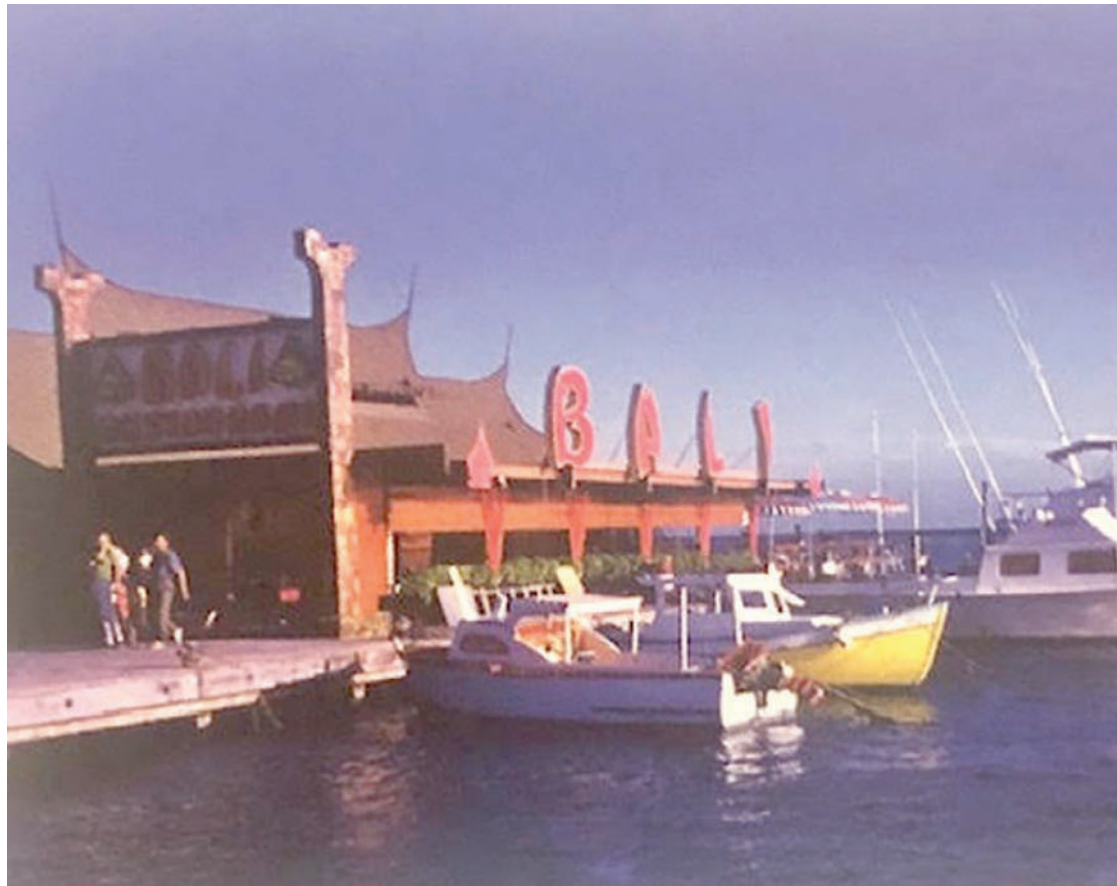
Associated Press

The Bali Restaurant: a touristic hot spot and lost gem on the island

(Oranjestad)—Once located by the yacht dock in front of the Parliament building, the Bali Restaurant was once both a touristic and local hot spot, and nowadays it's considered a forgotten gem on the island.

Known as "the floating restaurant", Bali first opened in 1955 by Willem "Bill" Strijland, who had experience in Javanese cuisine. At the time, the restaurant was pretty exclusive—with space to host only 25 guests. Yet, 4 years later, it was named the best restaurant in the Caribbean by the Caribbean Tourist Association.

The restaurant was probably most iconic for its Javanese-inspired exterior with its pointy, slanted roofs. However, the first version of Bali did not look like that at all but was still considered as one of the most popular restaurants on the island at the time. The restaurant saw three different owners during its existence, during which it underwent various



renovations and rebranding.

In 1964, the restaurant was taken over by Karel "Carl" Schmand. Over the years, the restaurant needed constant renovation and repair, mainly due to its vulnerability to leaks and the

unstable pillars underneath the foundation. However, the biggest change made to the restaurant happened in the year 1970—still under the ownership of Schmand, when it got its iconic pointy roofs. The restaurant was also expanded to host a total of 85 guests. This was

"The New Bali", who had its official (re)opening in 1972.

After 1972, when Ronny Schmand took over, the restaurant saw yet another expansion; this time complete with a long bar and dance floor, where guests enjoyed live music from

legendary Aruban musician and composer, Toti Arends.

After 1989, the restaurant was again handed over to other owners, and since then suffered from unstable pillars underneath the foundation, resulting in various leaks and overflowing of water into the restaurant. And as most great things come to an end, so did the survival and maintenance of the Bali Restaurant. However, folks today reminisce its legacy, and it's now considered a lost monument.

Be a part of the conversation: if you or any family member of yours have a memory of the Bali restaurant, whether it be a picture or just a story, share it with us! We would love to see this legendary hot spot through the lens of our visitors!

Source and pictures credit to: "De Kolibrie op de Rots (en meer over de geschiedenis van Aruba)" by Evert Bongers. □

Planning on snorkeling? Get to know our Candelchi!

ORANJESTAD—If you're ever planning on snorkeling during your vacation on Aruba, you may spot fish that you can't recognize. One of these may be the "Candelchi" (Squirrelfish), a common, yet shy fish that swims all year long in the waters of Aruba.

Let's talk about the names of fish. Do you know your fish? The Department of Agriculture, Livestock, and Fisheries, known as Santa Rosa, offers this informative article that illustrates some fish and their names in Papiamentu.

Candelchi, Squirrelfish, *Holocentrus adscensionis*:

Candelchi actually refers to the entire squirrelfish family or, as some say, when we say candelchi, we mean several different species but without distinguishing them by species. In this picture, we are showing the most common one in

our waters, which is called squirrelfish in English or scientifically known as *Holocentrus adscensionis*.

Under candelchi, we in Aruba generally refer to all the different species of squirrelfish. They all look alike and it's really difficult to distinguish between them.

The squirrelfish family is distinguished by the following characteristics. They are heart-shaped with pink or red hues and often show heart-shaped streaks between the scales along the body. They have hard fins and are always armed. Over at our sister island Curaçao, they are called "bari di clabo" (nail barrel) for that reason.

In our waters, there are 7 to 8 types or species present and they are sometimes caught and seen occasionally. They can be distinguished by different marks

such as color on the dorsal spine or marks on the body.

In Aruba:

Candelchi are found on reefs or areas with structure in the water where they

can hide. Although they prefer to hunt for food at night, they are also active during the day. They are edible and delicious when prepared dry and crispy with lime. It is particularly

challenging to scale the fish, which is why it is not one of the favorites among fishermen. They often live in groups. □



Aruba's kite flying tradition



(Oranjestad)—Every year for King's Day, Arubans gather with friends and family to fly kites. Big or small, paper or plastic, blue skies fill up with these colorful flying contraptions, brightening our yearly celebration of the Dutch Monarch.

The tradition of flying kites starts at home in the weeks leading up to King's Day. These kites were traditionally made with things found in the nearby mondi* and in the kitchen at home. Using dried up cactus sticks for the frame, old news

papers, and glue made from flour, water and salt to dry faster (some people even use cornstarch slurry as glue), kids usually make their own kites with their friends, parents or other close family members. Tails are made from old bed sheets, ripped and tied together to create a long string of fabric trailing behind the back end of the kite. To finish off the process, people used fish lines or thin rope to tie three corners of the kite together. Another long string of rope is tied in the knotted center and bundled up, used to steer the kite as it flies in the air. Decorating the kite was especially important, and children would use paint to create their own designs—the more colorful, the better!



People usually fly their kites in big open fields, like empty soccer and baseball fields found all around the island around noon, when the sun is at its brightest. In the past few years, kite flying has become a sport

in which groups of people would battle against each other to see whose kite is the biggest, the prettiest, and whose could fly flawlessly and longer in the air.

*Mondi: Aruban woods. □

Scott and Tina: "Aruba is to us an Oasis of relaxation"



ORANJESTAD — You are back and we would like to portrait you! By inviting you to send us your favorite vacation picture while enjoying our Happy Island.

Complete the sentence: Aruba to me is Send your picture with that text (including your name and where you are from) to: news@arubatoday.com and we will publish your vacation memory. Isn't that a special way to keep your best moments alive? Please do note: By submitting photos, text or any other materials, you give permission to The Aruba Today Newspaper, Caribbean Speed Printers and any of its affiliated companies to use said materials, as well as names, likeness, etc. for

promotional purposes without compensation. Last but not least: check out our website, Instagram and Facebook page! Thank you for supporting our free newspaper, we strive to make you a happy reader every day again. For today we received a lovely message from Scott and Tina Myers from Massachusetts.

They wrote to us saying: "Aruba is to us an Oasis of relaxation. A place where stress is a foreign unknown object. Sleeping late is natural and smiles are abundant. If short, the happiest place on earth." Thank you for sending us this wonderful message sharing what Aruba means to you with us and our readers! □



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Touchdowns, Tackles & Buckets Await at Tierra del Sol!

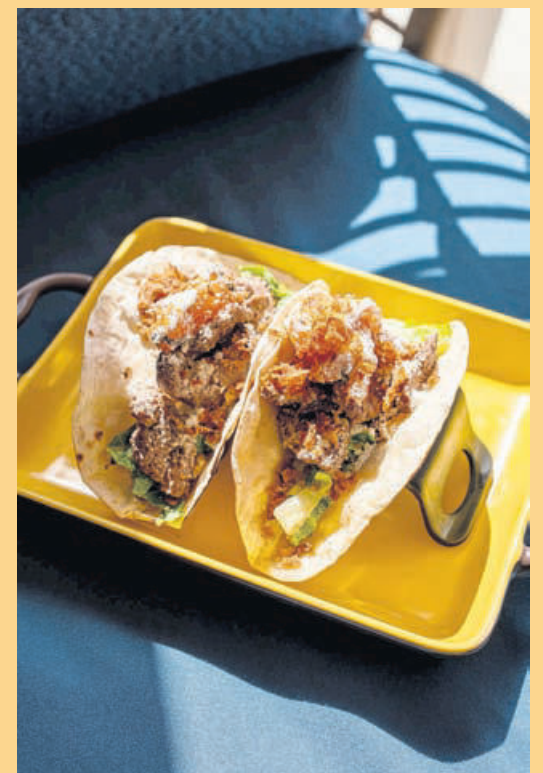


This Sunday, it's go big or go home! Tierra del Sol is gearing up for an epic touchdown event with a special live viewing of the biggest game in sports plus the can't-miss halftime show.

Catch every play on our massive 98" screen as the New England Patriots take on the Seattle Seahawks, and get ready for the spectacular halftime performance by Grammy winner Bad Bunny.

To match the heat of the game, we've created a full sports menu designed for serious fans, along with bucket specials featuring ice-cold local Balashi beers to keep the vibes flowing. The Birdie transforms into the ultimate sports arena, fully air-conditioned, great service, and perfectly chilled beers to cool down the excitement.

Don't miss out on the best Sunday of the year. For reservations, please call Tierra del Sol at +297 5867800 ext. 231 or 242 or email at TDSBA1@iberostar.com / TDSBA2@iberostar.com. Make sure not to miss the best Sunday of the year. ☐



Birds of Aruba



ORANJESTAD — On May 11th, 2010, the Aruba Birdlife Conservation was founded with the aim of protecting the biodiversity in general and birds in and around Aruba in particular.

Among other things, the foundation will focus on increasing the survival chances of species of wild birds by promoting their preservation and conservation. The foundation publishes the most beautiful



pictures of local birds on their social media that show us the beauty of Aruba's birds and nature in general. Aruba Today gives you a little peek with the following pictures and descriptions from the foundation's Facebook page.

The Great Egret

Serenity in Aruba's National Park, a Great Egret flying in peace. When it is peaceful and quite, beautiful things start happening in nature.

Canadian in the house

The breeding season is over and it's getting pretty cold in North America. Shore birds have started moving southwards as early as July. This wetland beauty wants to keep its toes warm. Our Canadian friends know exactly where they can do so best. A Greater Yellowlegs rediscovering Aruba's Bubali Wetlands.



Cabochon

In its living form of so much more value than any gemstone. Aruba's smallest and most master of flight. A top pollinator. A hovering Blenchi inspecting the human who just entered his territory.
English: Blue-tailed Emerald (male)
Dutch: Blauwstaartsmaragdkolibrie (mannetje).

Aruba's to enjoy. Aruba's to protect. ☐

Visit the island's popular cave sites!



(Oranjestad)—Among the endless sea of dark brown sand and cacti, there are two caves hidden in the outskirts of San Nicolas, in the north-eastern area of the island. These caves, The Quadirikiri cave and The Fontein Cave are open to visitors of the Arikok National Park, so if you ever decide to take an “off-road” tour in the park, be sure to visit these prehistoric caves.

Quadirikiri Cave

Known for its two chambers accompanied by a skylight, the Quadirikiri Cave is the most popular cave among locals and tourists, as it is easy to walk through and provides great lighting for pictures.

Woman in Quadirikiri Cave, Arikok National Park, Aruba

As with all prehistoric or ancient sites, there is always a folk legend that adds to the lore and mystery of the site. The Quadirikiri cave is no different. The most well-known legend behind the cave could be considered as Aruba's first love story, as it tells the tale of the undying love between the chief's daughter and her beloved. As legend would have it, the chief disapproved of his daughter's choice of lover, as he thought him unworthy. Stubborn and filled with anger, the daughter refused to turn away her beloved.

So, the chief decided to lock her up in the Quadirikiri Cave, in hopes that she would soon calm down and turn away her lover. Her beloved, in turn, was locked away in the Tunnel of Love (Now known as the Huliba Cave).

Through the pathways underneath the Tunnel of Love running up to the Quadirikiri cave, the two love birds found each other, and refused to let each other go. Because of their stubbornness, they both died in the Quadirikiri Cave, their ascending spirits burning two holes in the ceiling of the cave. This is why the cave has two holes through which sunlight passes through to illuminate the chamber.

Though there have been discoveries of Amerindian drawing on the wall, these have mostly been ruined by vandalism. However, the Fontein Cave further up north, provides a better glimpse in prehistoric Amerindian paintings.

Fontein Cave

Longer than the Quadirikiri Cave, the Fontein Cave contains pathways that stretch to the limestone walls further down. Here is also where prehistoric drawings can be seen. Though this cave does not have its own legend, this was speculated to have been occupied—or at least used by prehistoric Arawak settlers on the island for rituals and other spiritual ceremonies.

The Huliba Cave/ Tunnel of Love

The Huliba Cave, formerly known as the Tunnel of Love, was once open to the public, and was the biggest and most accessible of all three caves. This cave had five chambers, including one that is heart-shaped. This cave had narrow stairs that led to long pathways deep into the cave, with a staircase leading to the exit on the other side. In one of the chambers, there used to be the carving of the Virgin Mary, put there for the protection of the cave.

However, the Huliba Cave has been permanently closed for a few years now, as a way to preserve the bat population that lives in the cave. These Long Tongue Fruit Bats and Insect Eater Bats are very important to the ecosystem of the island. Though this cave is no longer accessible to the public, it surely is interesting to learn more about the history of these caves and the Arawak tribes that resided or utilized them.

Do note that these caves are very dark, humid, hot, and are inhabited by bats. Do wear comfortable clothing and shoes, as the pathways in these caves may be rough and bumpy. Take care to not disturb the bats' habitat. □



Create museum memories with the entire family!



Museums are an integral part of conserving and honoring cultures, and Aruba is no exception. Our Island has a wide selection of various museums for our locals and visitors to see. Take this opportunity to learn about our island and experience a different day beyond the beach. Let us introduce to you to these locations.

Museum of Industry Aruba
The Museum of Industry is located in San Nicolas. This museum presents the history of gold, aloe, phosphate, oil and tourism through elaborated displays and multimedia installations.

The Museum of Industry is situated in the Water Tower and narrates Aruba's industrial history which began in the 19th century. The Water Tower was built in 1939 and consists of three sections: the substructure, the high-rising vertical shaft, and the tank at the top. The Water Tower was purchased by the Monuments fund in 2003 so it could be restored and preserved as one of Aruba's monuments. The Museum of Industry is part of Aruban Museum Foundation (FMA), which is a foundation that maintains, preserves, and protects the Aruban cultural sector, history, and nature. The museum of Industry is open daily from 9 am till 6 pm.

For more information check out their Facebook page: Museum of Industry Aruba.

Archaeological Museum of Aruba

The Archaeological Museum of Aruba is located at Schelpstraat 42 in downtown Oranjestad. The renovated historic Ecury com-

plex in downtown Oranjestad has been transformed from a family home to a modern museum that preserves Aruba's Amerindian cultural heritage. This 21st century museum is especially designed to preserve valuable artifacts dating back to the Pre-Ceramic period of 2500 BC.

In the late 1980's AMA identified its need for an adequate housing for its collection and activities. After studying various options, a project proposal was drawn up, including the acquisition and restoration of historical buildings in downtown Oranjestad.

These historical buildings were formerly the property of the Ecury family. The "Ecury Complex", is a cluster of single and two-story historic buildings, mainly Dutch colonial architecture from the late 19th and 20th century on a plot of approximately 1,700 m2.

In 1997 the Aruban Government bought the complex for the National Archaeological Museum project. In 2004 a financial agreement was signed with the European Development Fund and in 2006 restoration and construction work began on the monumental buildings and the new to build exhibition space. In



December 2007 the key to the complex was delivered and the museum's employees moved to the new location. The final design for the exhibit was completed in November 2007 and the permanent exhibit, financed by the Aruban Government and the Union of Cultural Organizations (UNOCA), opened in July 2009.

At the new location the National Archaeological Mu-



seum Aruba uses approximately 500 m2 for its permanent exhibit. This exhibit showcases archaeological objects and conveys modern exhibition techniques information on the origin and culture of the first inhabitants of the island. The new permanent exhibit gives the visitor an insight into the cultures that inhabited the island in Pre-Historical and Early Historical times. The museum regularly hosts public seminars, special ex-

hibitions and workshop for visitors to enjoy.

The museum is open daily from 9 am till 5 pm.

For more information check out the Facebook page National Archaeological Museum Aruba or website: www.manaruba.org

Editor's note: Pictures are property of the respective museums. □

Receive your exclusive Gallery Reading with Spirit Medium Tiffany Rice!

Join One Love Foundation, Inc. for an intimate and unforgettable evening with internationally known Spirit Medium Tiffany Rice on Friday, March 6, 2026, held at Eagle Aruba Resort's Tasting Room in the Double Down Bar area.

Doors Open: **5:30 PM**
Event Time: **6:00-8:00 PM**
Tickets: **\$75 per person**
Limited to just 30 guests

Your ticket includes wine, champagne, water, and a cheese & cracker platter. (All other beverages available via cash bar.)

Please note: Attendance does not guarantee a personal reading, as this is a gallery-style event.

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Tickets available via Eventbrite — advance purchase required.
Gallery Reading With Spirit Medium Tiffany Rice to Support Aruba Animals!

Once tickets sell out, no additional tickets will be released.

100% of the proceeds go to animal welfare on the island.

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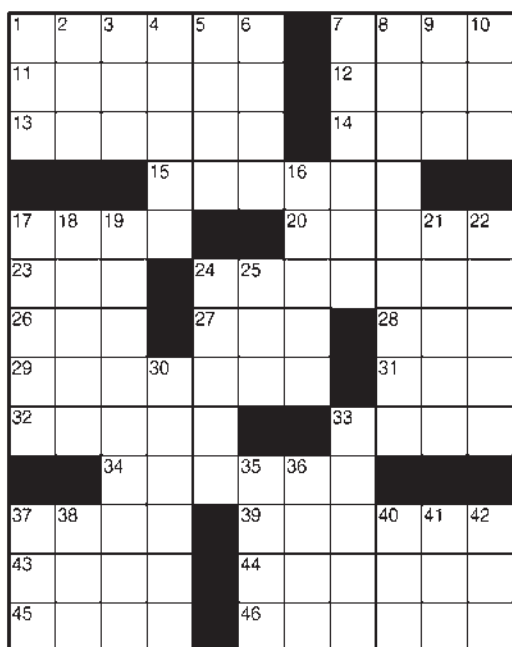
By THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS 44 Mars or
1 Entices Mercury
7 "Waterloo" group
11 Stressed type
12 Placed down
13 Venus's sister
14 Does something
15 En-dangered
17 Com-ponent
20 Revue segments
23 Thurman of film
24 "Brand New Key" singer
26 Snap-shot
27 Wisdom bringer
28 Gadot of "Wonder Woman"
29 Rorschach creation
31 Web address
32 River through Nantes
33 Relaxing resorts
34 Get snug
37 Border
39 Book checks
43 Praise

DOWN

1 "My country — of thee"
2 Summer in Paris
3 Spoil
4 Cloth fold
5 Color
6 Wound reminder
7 Denali setting
8 Computer safeguard
9 Particle
10 TV spots
16 Key
17 Eye opening
18 — acids
19 Amassing
21 Pageant topper
22 Hawks Manning
24 Bulls and bucks
25 Swelled head
30 Kennel club
33 Car type
35 Lights-out music
36 Doozy
37 Quarter-back
38 Block up
40 Neither Dem. nor Rep.
41 Earl Grey, e.g.
42 Pig place

LINED SUING
ADORE ARDOR
WOMAN IN LOVE
SSE INK LAG
DENIM
ROSES NINER
ARIA NILE
GENTS CUPID
HALLS
ATM TEE YEN
CRAZY IN LOVE
TIMER CEDES
SPANS HEART



2-15

AXYDLBAAXR
is LONGFELLOW

One letter stands for another. In this sample, A is used for the three L's, X for the two O's, etc. Single letters, apostrophes, the length and formation of the words are all hints. Each day the code letters are different.

2-15 **CRYPTOQUOTE**

ZSX XGS IQNSR EQUUP PJK

IGSUS XGS ZMFGX EQA AJX.

— CJGMX OQKRGMO

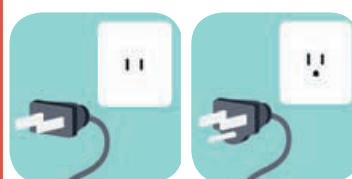
Cryptoquote: A GOOD TRAVELER HAS NO FIXED PLANS, AND IS NOT INTENT ON ARRIVING. — LAO TZU

Cruise ship Schedule: Feb. 2 - 8 2026

			ARR	DEPT	BERTH	
MON	02	OCEANIA NAUTICA FREEWINDS - Dept.	07.00 ****	19.00 22.30	C E	1 -
TUE	03	CARNIVAL HORIZON SERENADE OF THE SEAS	08.00 08.00	22.00 23.00	B C	1 1
WED	04	ROTTERDAM BRILLIANCE OF THE SEAS FREEWINDS	08.00 08.00 06.00	17.00 23.00 ****	B C E	1 1 1
THU	05	SILVER SHADOW BRILLIANT LADY NORWEGIAN SKY	13.00 10.00 13.30	**** 22.00 22.30	B C I	1 1 1
FRI	06	SILVER SHADOW - Dept. MARELLA DISCOVERY NORWEGIAN STAR	**** 08.00 11.00	18.00 20.00 20.00	B C I	- 1 1
SAT	07	CARNIVAL LEGEND	09.00	22.00	C	1
SUN	08	CARNIVAL MIRACLE CELEBRITY ASCENT FREEWINDS - Dept.	09.00 09.00 ****	22.00 23.00 22.30	B C E	1 1 -

Helpful tips for your stay on Aruba

(Oranjestad)—When traveling to another country, especially for the first time, it is always better to be over-prepared than under-prepared. That is why we have a list of basic but important information that we think may come in handy to Aruba's visitors.



Electrical power

Aruba generally operates on 110V to 127V supply voltage and 60Hz. There are also three types of outlets used on the island: type A with two flat prongs; type B with two flat and one grounding prong, and on occasion, type F with two round prong and two earth clips on the side. However, Type A is most commonly found in homes and establishments.



Drinking water

The water that flows through the sinks of every house, hotels and other establishments is distilled and perfectly safe to drink. Aruba's drinking water exceeds WHO's international standards for water quality, so there is no need to buy bottled water from the store.



Safety

Since February 2024, Aruba has been categorized as the safest country in the Caribbean by The Telegraph, and many tourist that visit have often told us how they feel safe to explore the island or walk around at night. However, rare incidents do occur, so keep yourself and your belongings safe.

SUDOKU

To play sudoku, use logic to fill the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the numbers 1-9 only once. Puzzle difficulty increases from Monday to Sunday.

King Classic Sudoku

				2		8	
	2		3			9	4
	9		5		4		2
4		5				8	
				6			5
					5	6	9
6			2				7
	8					2	1
		9	7	5			6

Difficulty: ★★★

2/5

Answer to previous puzzle

4	6	2	5	3	1	8	9	7
7	8	1	2	4	9	3	6	5
3	9	5	7	6	8	4	1	2
9	5	3	6	1	2	7	8	4
8	2	4	9	7	5	1	3	6
6	1	7	3	8	4	5	2	9
5	3	6	1	9	7	2	4	8
1	7	8	4	2	6	9	5	3
2	4	9	8	5	3	6	7	1

Difficulty: ★★★

2/4

Do you need to control your cortisol? Probably not, doctors say

By **DEVI SHASTRI**
AP Health Writer

Cortisol, what is known as the stress hormone, is the talk of the internet.

Wellness influencers warn about the various symptoms of chronically high cortisol: waking up at 3 a.m., swollen "cortisol face" and accumulating belly fat. And many offer diet and exercise routines that they claim will help.

But do you really need supplements and advice from influencers to control your cortisol? Doctors say it's very unlikely.

Don't be so quick to label this hormone as a villain, they say. And if you suspect something is off, talk to a professional. Here's what to know.

Cortisol keeps you alive and disorders are relatively rare

Cortisol is a hormone and you need it to survive. It comes from the adrenal glands, located above the kidneys, and is one of many hormones at play in times of stress. It can influence inflammation, the immune system, metabolism, blood pressure and many other bodily functions.

Cortisol is incredibly attuned to your body and environment. It fluctuates throughout the day, rising in the morning when you wake up and falling at night before you go to



A German soccer fan reacts at a fan zone after a quarter final match between Germany and Spain at the Euro 2024 soccer tournament in Berlin, Germany, July 5, 2024.

Associated Press

sleep. It also rises when you're sick or in other times of stress, doctors say.

"Our cortisol level is regulated by the minute," said Dr. Roberto Salvatori, a Johns Hopkins University endocrinologist. "It is very sensitive." It's rare that people have a disorder where cortisol on its own is the cause. If a person's cortisol level is chronically low, doctors would diagnose them with adrenal insufficiency. This includes an autoimmune condition called Addison's disease, in which the immune system attacks the adrenal gland.

People with Cushing's syndrome have cortisol levels that are too high. Among its causes are tumors, which are usually benign, in the adrenal or pituitary glands. It is treated with medica-

tion, surgery or both.

Talk to your doctor before ordering a cortisol test

The symptoms of either high or low cortisol are wide-ranging and can overlap with signs of other health issues.

Adrenal insufficiency can manifest as fatigue, unintentional weight loss, low blood pressure and loss of appetite. Cushing's syndrome comes with weight gain, high blood pressure, brittle bones, weight gain around the face and belly, abnormal hair growth in women, sleep issues and more. □

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Aloe:Tel.584 4606

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San Nicolas	584 5000
Police Tipline	11141
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Fire Dept.	115
Red Cross	582 2219

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Prof. Taxi	588 0035
Taxi D.T.S.	587 2300
Taxi Serv. Aruba	583 3232
A1 Taxi Serv.	280 2828

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Avianca	588 0059
Jet Blue	588 2244
Surinam	582 7896

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Renters use 'rent now, pay later' services to manage monthly payments, but fees raise concerns

By KEN SWEET and CORA LEWIS

The Associated Press

NEW YORK (AP) — Rent can eat up an entire paycheck at the start of the month, so a growing number of renters are turning to a financial product that promises relief by letting them split the bill for a price.

So-called "rent now, pay later" services have emerged over the past few years as housing costs climb and paychecks grow less predictable, particularly for lower-income and gig-economy workers. According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, rents have jumped nearly 28% in past five years.

Companies such as Flex, Livble and, more recently, Affirm, say breaking rent into multiple payments can help renters manage cash flow. But consumer advocates warn the products typically function like short-term loans, layering fees



A "For Rent" sign for apartment displays outside apartment building during a cold day in Chicago, Wednesday, Jan. 28, 2026.

onto already strained budgets and, in some cases, carrying triple-digit effective interest rates raising questions about whether they ease financial pressure or deepen it.

Kellen Johnson, 44, started using Flex to split up his rent payments about two years ago. Instead of paying the whole \$1,850 of his rent on the first of the month, Johnson would pay \$1,350 on that date, and \$500 on the 15th. For the service, Flex collected a \$14.99 monthly subscription fee, as well as 1% of the total rent, which for Johnson was \$18.50, bringing his monthly charges for the app to more than \$33.

Johnson said he was willing to pay the extra costs in part because he worked as an independently contracted delivery person for Amazon at the time, and his paychecks could vary. "It was an expense that I was incurring, but I went ahead as it was more convenient," said Johnson, who now works as a driver for senior citizens in Sacramento, California.

Roughly 109 million Americans, or about 42.5 million households, are renters in the United States. The Census Bureau estimated in 2024 that a large share of those households pay 30%

or more of their monthly income on rent. The bureau considers such households to be "cost burdened," meaning rent consumes so much of their income that they have less ability to plan for future expenses or build wealth.

Rent now, pay later services generally operate the same way: The company pays the landlord the full rent when due, and the renter repays the company in two or more installments over the course of the month. Because rent can be such a large expense, the companies argue that spreading payments out can give renters more cash on hand.

Many of these services come with fees. The fees can be structured differently but should be generally thought of as cost of credit, consumer advocates warn. In Johnson's case, he was paying \$33.49 for a two-week loan of \$500, for an effective annual percentage rate of 172%, when expressed using standard consumer-lending calculations.

"Renters should be skeptical of any financing providers that have partnered with a landlord and be skeptical of anything that sells itself as no fees or no interest," said Mike Pierce,

executive director of Protect Borrowers. Pierce previously worked at the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau and co-authored a report that was released this week on the industry.

Launched in 2019, Flex is one of the largest companies focused on splitting rent payments. The company says its 1.5 million customers now send about \$2 billion a month in rent through its system, and several of the country's largest landlords accept Flex as a payment option.

Flex says most of its customers are lower-income renters with weaker credit profiles. The company reports a median credit score of 604 among its users and says about one in three customers works more than one job to make ends meet. A Flex spokesman says the average customer uses the service three to four times a year. Johnson used it every month.

Livble does not charge a subscription, but charges renters a fee ranging from \$30 to \$40, according to the company's help page. Depending on how long the renter defers part of the payment, Livble's fees can translate into effective annual percentage rates of roughly 104% to 139%.

The buy now, pay later

company Affirm said this month that it is piloting a program allowing some customers to split rent into two payments. The program is being tested in partnership with Esusu, a company that reports rent payments to credit bureaus to help consumers build credit. An Affirm spokesman said the company is not charging renters interest or fees to use the product, but may charge landlords fees.

As another financing option, landlords are increasingly accepting credit cards for rent payments. Bilt, a credit card startup, built its brand around targeting renters when it launched, and some tenants also use credit cards to accumulate rewards or points.

But paying rent by credit card can also be costly. Landlords typically pass the processing fees on to tenants. Depending on the card issuer and payment network, these fees can range from about 2.5% to 3.5% of the rent. For a renter paying \$1,500 a month, that translates to roughly \$37.50 to \$52.50 in fees — a monthly cost comparable to what services like Livble and Flex charge.

Economists and renters' advocates argue that none of these financing options address the fundamental issue of affordability in the rental market. If credit cards, or flexible rent payment options become more widely used, they worry rents could rise further as landlords start factoring in a potential renters' weekly cash flow as opposed to the rental market in the area the building is located in.

Merchants already pass along credit card processing costs to customers in the form of higher prices, and advocates worry that the rental market could adopt similar patterns. For example, Livble is owned by RealPage, which last year settled allegations that its algorithm allowed landlords to collude and push rents higher. □



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Two high NFL draft picks, two different paths: Maye and Darnold will face off in Super Bowl

By JOSH DUBOW

AP Pro Football Writer

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) —

Drake Maye and Sam Darnold came into the NFL in similar fashion as No. 3 overall picks tasked with being franchise quarterbacks for struggling teams.

Their paths to the Super Bowl couldn't be much different.

Maye is looking to join Peyton and Eli Manning as the only quarterbacks selected in the top nine of the last 36 drafts to win a Super Bowl with the team he debuted with as a pro. Peyton Manning won it all in his ninth season with Indianapolis and Eli Manning in his fourth with the New York Giants after being acquired in a draft-day trade from San Diego.

Only two of the other 55 QBs taken in the top nine of the draft since 1990 won a Super Bowl with any team, with Trent Dilfer doing it in Baltimore after being drafted by Tampa Bay and Matthew Stafford with the Los Angeles Rams after being picked by Detroit.

Maye is trying to join Russell Wilson, Ben Roethlisberger, Tom Brady and Kurt Warner as the only QBs to win a Super Bowl in their first two seasons, with the Roethlisberger the only first-round pick to do it.

While Maye's success has been immediate, Darnold's has been anything but. Picked third by the New



New England Patriots quarterback Drake Maye, left, and Seattle Seahawks quarterback Sam Darnold, right, smile on stage with the Lombardi Trophy during the NFL Super Bowl Opening Night, Monday, Feb. 2, 2026, in San Jose, Calif., ahead of the Super Bowl 60 football game between the New England Patriots and the Seattle Seahawks.

Associated Press

York Jets in 2018, Darnold struggled during his first three seasons before being traded to Carolina. He then spent two nondescript seasons in and out of the starting lineup with the Panthers before going to San Francisco as a backup in 2023. That helped reset his career. He won 14 games as a starter in Minnesota last season before signing with Seattle and winning 14 games again in the regular season this year before making the Super Bowl.

Darnold could become the first starting quarterback to win a Super Bowl after previously playing for four oth-

er franchises. Brad Johnson, Jim Plunkett, Len Dawson and Nick Foles all played for two other franchises before winning a Super Bowl, with Foles doing it in his second stint with Philadelphia. The Maye-Darnold matchup is a rare one between highly drafted quarterbacks, with only two other Super Bowls featuring two starting QBs picked in the top five of the draft. The other two were matchups of former No. 1 overall picks, with Matthew Stafford besting Joe Burrow in Super Bowl 56 and Peyton Manning topping Cam Newton in Super Bowl 50.

Fight on for USC

Southern California has produced more Super Bowl players than any other school but hasn't had a starting quarterback appear in the game until this year.

Darnold will be the first QB who finished his college career at USC to start in the Super Bowl after five other Trojans quarterbacks lost in either the conference or league title game before the Super Bowl. The Trojans have had 70 players appear in the title game before this season, two more

than second-place Miami. North Carolina also will join the list of colleges to produce a starting quarterback in the Super Bowl, with Maye getting the honors. That will raise the total of colleges with a Super Bowl starting QB to 51.

Michigan has the most starts with 10 all by Brady while California has the most individual QBs, with Jared Goff, Aaron Rodgers, Craig Morton and Joe Kapp doing it. Vince Ferragamo, who began his college career at Cal before transferring to Nebraska, also started in the Super Bowl.

North Carolina, the alma mater of 11th president of the United States, James Polk, also can become the sixth school to produce a U.S. president and a Super Bowl-winning quarterback. Delaware was the last school to join that list when Joe Biden was inaugurated in 2021 eight years after Joe Flacco won the Super Bowl. The other schools are Miami of Ohio (Benjamin Harrison and Roethlisberger), Michigan (Gerald Ford and Brady), Stanford (Herbert Hoover, John Elway and Jim Plunkett) and Navy (Jimmy Carter and Roger Staubach).

Missing stars

The Super Bowl is typically filled with star players, with an average of more than six first-team AP All-Pros taking the field for the title game the last three seasons. □

Christian McCaffrey wins 2025 Salute to Service award for supporting military veterans

SAN FRANCISCO (AP) — San Francisco 49ers All-Pro running back Christian McCaffrey is the USAA 2025 Salute to Service award winner.

McCaffrey beat out Minnesota Vikings running back Aaron Jones and Dallas Cowboys tight end Jake Ferguson to win the award announced on Wednesday. The award recognizes the "exceptional efforts by members of the NFL family to honor and support the military community." McCaffrey will be recognized at NFL Honors on Thursday night. The Christian McCaffrey Foundation launched an initiative, 23 and Troops, in

2021, that offers a medically based, holistic approach to support Special Operations forces veterans healing from post-traumatic stress. The program has contributed nearly \$700,000 to military support efforts, including \$250,000 to REBOOT Recovery and a recent \$250,000 partnership with Resilience Code to provide veterans with a full year of personalized medical care.

The foundation has also eased seasonal burdens by covering holiday layaway balances for 515 military families. McCaffrey also regularly connects with active-duty personnel, veterans, and families. □



NFC running back Christian McCaffrey (23), of the San Francisco 49ers, speaks during media availability at NFL Pro Bowl Games practice, Monday, Feb. 2, 2026, in San Francisco.

Associated Press

Double cork? Blindside? Goofy? A glossary of snowboarding terms for the Winter Olympics

By JOSEPH WILSON and ED-DIE PELLIS

AP Sports Writers

LIVIGNO, Italy (AP) — A backside double cork 1080! Followed by a cab triple cork 1440! Holy Crail, that was a sweet grab!

The snowboarders and freestyle skiers will be speaking a language all their own as they "shred some gnar" (ride some gnarly conditions) at the Milan Cortina Winter Olympics.

Can't tell a melon from a method grab? No worries. Here's a cheat sheet of some terms you might hear when the action starts in Livigno, Italy.



Austria's Anna Gasser competes during the women's slopestyle finals at the 2022 Winter Olympics, Feb. 6, 2022, in Zhangjiakou, China.

Associated Press

The main events

Halfpipe: Imagine a massive tunnel that you could drive a truck through, slice the top off, then transform it into hard-packed snow. That is the halfpipe where snowboarders and freeskiers take turns zooming across its inclined slope to gather speed before launching into a series of acrobatic jumps. The halfpipe at the Livigno ski resort hosting these Olympic events measures 220 meters (240 yards) in length, 22 meters (24 yards) in width, and rises to 7.2 meters (23.6 feet) in height.

Slopestyle: A course located on a slope where snowboarders and freestyle skiers take turns trying to put together the most polished and demanding series of tricks coming off rails and molded bumps for aerial lift. The Livigno slopestyle course allows for jumps that can exceed 25 meters (27 yards).

Big air: The third of the "park" events consists of athletes performing one single "big" jump. The Livigno big air jump ramp peaks at over 40 meters (yards).

The tricky details

180, 360, 540, 1440: The degrees of a spinning trick completed in a single jump. 360 is 1 complete spin, 720 two spins, etc. The most

spins completed in competition are 6 1/2. That's a 2340, both on snowboard and skis, and the massive spins like that almost always come in big air. On the halfpipe, anyone who pulls off a 1440 will be in contention for a medal. Important for street credibility: 2340 and the like are pronounced "twenty-three forty," not "two thousand, three-hundred and forty."

Backside: Facing backwards going into a rail on a slopestyle course, as well as when a rider or skier faces uphill when completing a spin on a jump. Frontside means a rider faces downhill when completing a spin.

Cork: A head-over-heels flip that produces a cork-screw effect. A double cork is two flips, a triple cork, three, etc. Triple corks are the trick that could win the men's halfpipe.

Grabs: How the snowboarder reaches down and holds the board during a jump. There are many, but among those that come up for the top riders: Mute (front hand grabs the toe edge), melon (front hand grabs the back edge), stalefish (grab heel edge with rear hand), method (a melon but with a little flair, tweaking the board up and twisting) and, of course, the crail (both hands and back leg should be straight; do not try this at home). Judges look to see whether the rider actually grabs the board, not just places their hand on top of it, and some of these grabs need to be executed between bindings.

Grabs, Part 2: Freeskiing has its own glossary of these grabs, including Japan (behind and across to grab opposite ski) and seat belt (imagine putting a seatbelt on, but by bringing the buckle up to grab the latch).

Goofy: When a snowboarder leads with his "bad foot." For a right-handed person, it would mean leading with the right foot. □

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